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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

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Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 9 August 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia dated 7 and 8 August 2012 on the fourth anniversary of the 2008 August war and an interview by the Russian President (see annexes I and II).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes issued as a document of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Lomaia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I to the identical letters dated 9 August 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the fourth anniversary of the 2008 August war

Four years ago, on 7 August 2008, Russian troops made an incursion into Georgia's sovereign territory and, in flagrant violation of universally recognized norms and principles of international law, carried out direct military aggression against Georgia.

On 12 August 2008, a six-point ceasefire agreement was signed. The Russian Federation, however, continues to flout its obligation to withdraw its forces to their pre-war positions as set out in this agreement.

The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation remain in Georgia and occupy 20 per cent of the country's territory. Russia has proceeded to recognize the regimes created with its political support and military backing, both in Abkhazia and in the Tskhinvali region. Under the pretence of concluding an inter-State agreement with these entities created through ethnic cleansing, Russia has set up two military bases on the territory of Georgia and has deployed more than 10,000 servicemen thereto. The ongoing build-up of offensive military capabilities in these bases includes the deployment of state-of-the-art command and control systems, tanks and rocket-propelled artillery, in addition to the training of assault and special operations troops.

Contrary to the provisions of the ceasefire agreement, Russia openly opposes the establishment of international security and stability mechanisms in the territories under occupation. At the same time, Russia continuously poses obstacles to the Geneva International Discussions, which were designed with two aims in mind: developing international security arrangements and ensuring the safe and dignified return of displaced persons.

Georgia's friends did not leave the country alone, neither during the 2008 war, nor afterwards, to face the existential challenge. The efforts of allies helped to check the progress of the Russian troops in August 2008. Following the war, friendly countries have rendered considerable assistance to Georgia in restoring economic stability and repairing damaged infrastructure.

Georgia is especially grateful to every State that has contributed personnel and helped to deploy the European Union Monitoring Mission within the shortest possible time after the conflict. The occupation regime impedes the access of the Mission to the occupied territories. Mission members, however, contribute significantly to everyday stability by reducing the space for military or political provocations. It is to be hoped that artificial obstacles recently created by Moscow and by the Sokhumi proxy regime to the participation of the Mission in the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism will be overcome and that the Mission will be allowed to carry out its mandated tasks.

Despite grave challenges, Georgia stands firmly on course towards the family of European nations. Our goal is to build a democratic State based upon liberal

values and to create a stable, secure and just environment for every person living in Georgia. Concrete steps have been taken in recent years to build closer ties with the European Union — an association agreement, visa simplification dialogue and deep and comprehensive free trade agreements are currently being negotiated. On the fourth anniversary of the war, Georgia remains committed to making a special contribution to the strengthening of international security in the region and worldwide. Our soldiers help to maintain security in Afghanistan. Georgia's presence in the United Nations and European Union civilian and police missions is set to increase in the years to come. Georgia actively shares its experience in achieving reforms with all interested States. Georgia shares its best practices in tackling corruption, in improving the quality of public services and in making the transition from being a consumer to becoming a provider of security.

The Government of Georgia adopted an engagement strategy in the aftermath of the 2008 war, the main aim of which is to restore confidence through day-to-day relations with people living in the occupied territories and to offer them opportunities for economic and social development. By implementing this strategy, we are extending the hand of friendship to our Abkhaz and Ossetian compatriots and are expressing our wish to set aside past disagreements, while taking active and pragmatic steps towards enabling the communities divided by the new Berlin Wall of the occupation line to reengage and to look once more with confidence at each other and towards the shared future.

Despite the aggression of 2008, our country maintains a friendly approach to Russian citizens. The economic investments of Russian companies active in Georgia are protected. Georgia unilaterally abolished visa requirements, first for the residents of the neighbouring North Caucasus and subsequently for all citizens of the Russian Federation. This has given a new impetus to tourism and has done much to improve people-to-people relations. Air and land traffic between Georgia and Russia has effectively been restored. Georgia has on more than one occasion expressed its readiness to negotiate with Russia on all outstanding issues at any level. Unfortunately, Russia has not reciprocated.

Georgia maintains a constructive position during the Geneva International Discussions. Georgia unilaterally pledged not to use force to resolve the conflict, while Moscow has yet to reciprocate. During the upcoming rounds of the Discussions, we hope that Russia will take heed of the calls by the European Union and undertake a similar binding commitment on non-use of force towards Georgia. Georgia will continue to demonstrate restraint and pragmatism in measures to address the concrete problems of those living in the occupied territories. However, red lines are firmly drawn at questioning Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

On the fourth anniversary of the 2008 war, we reiterate that our goal is to resolve the conflict peacefully rather than to create a new frozen conflict on Georgian territory. Every person living within the borders of our country deserves the right to develop his or her own potential in dignity to benefit from the successes of our country, while being free from fear.

In implementing this vision, we need close relations of partnership with the countries of the region, with members of the Euro-Atlantic family and with international organizations. We rely upon the support of our partners in ensuring

sustainable peace and security in the region. For its part, Georgia is ready to play an active part in strengthening international peace and security.

On the fourth anniversary of the war, Georgia is confidently looking towards the future, while striving to establish itself firmly among the free nations of the world.

Annex II to the identical letters dated 9 August 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on an interview by the Russian President

Earlier today, Russian President Vladimir Putin acknowledged that, as early as 2006, Russia had developed a plan to invade Georgia. This admission contradicts Russia's earlier assertions that its 2008 military attack was in response to a surprise attack from Georgia and that its invasion was meant to prevent a genocide and protect Russian citizens. It also underscores the premeditated nature of the invasion and highlights Moscow's utter disregard for international law. President Putin, who was Prime Minister at the time, also revealed that Moscow had been training militias of the Tskhinvali regime to participate in the invasion.

"There was a plan, it's no secret in my opinion", Putin said at the Kremlin in televised remarks to Russian media representatives. "It's within the framework of this plan that the Russian side acted. It was prepared by the General Staff at the end of 2006 or the beginning of 2007. It was approved by me, agreed with me." Moreover, he said that within the framework of that plan South Ossetian militiamen had been trained by Russian military specialists, adding that the men had proved very helpful during the conflict.

President Putin's open admission of the long-term, premeditated nature of the 2008 invasion offers critical insight into the conflict. His statements confirm Georgia's long-standing position that Russia's armed incursion into Georgia in August 2008 constituted a premeditated act of aggression against a sovereign nation.

They also echo a statement made in November 2011 by the then President, Dmitry Medvedev, that the military aggression was intended to counter Georgia's North Atlantic Treaty Organization ambitions and thus our country's sovereign choice to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic community. "We have simply calmed some of our neighbours down by showing them that they should behave correctly in respect of Russia and in respect of neighbouring small States", he said in Rostov-na-Donu. "And for some of our partners, including for the North Atlantic Alliance, it was a signal that, before taking a decision about expansion of the Alliance, one should at first think about the geopolitical stability. I deem these [issues] to be the major lessons of those developments in 2008."

President Putin also admitted that Russia trained militias of the Tskhinvali regime to fight Georgia's Armed Forces, a fact that highlights that Russia had for years been flouting its obligations as a supposed peacekeeper in Tskhinvali. These actions directly contravened Russia's commitments in various peace agreements, while blatantly violating Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

On the basis of today's statement, the Government of Georgia calls upon the international community to continue to pressure Russia to withdraw its occupying forces from Georgia and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbours.

This is especially critical given that Russia is continuing its military build-up in the occupied territories and is engaging in hostile rhetoric. This poses a grave and present security threat to Georgia. The international community should demand that Russia pledge not to use force against Georgia and should establish international security arrangements in these occupied Georgian territories.